

# Sheep who listen

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[ 0 : 00 ] I love verse 42 right at the end there, do you see? And in that place many believed in Jesus. So in Jerusalem, the capital city, they rejected him. The city centre elite, the powerful religious establishment, the public thought leaders, the social media influencers of their day.

They'd had enough of him. They'd slurred him. He's demon possessed, why listen to him? They'd shunned him, they'd tried to stone him and seize him. This confident, dominating, influential majority doing all they can to cancel and erase Jesus from their lives.

Yet when Jesus goes back across the Jordan River, away from the centre, to the fringes of the city, to the fringes of society, in verse 41, many people came to him. And verse 42, in that place, on the edges, many believed in Jesus. Isn't that good? Pretty up to date, maybe?

I wonder whether you can connect yourself into what's going on here. The end of John chapter 10, it's right in the middle of the Apostle John's testimony, his gospel.

John's gospel, this trustworthy eyewitness account of what took place 2,000 years ago. And under God, John wrote this gospel, the words of which we've just read, with a specific purpose for you and me.

[ 1 : 34 ] He tells us later, in chapter 20 and verses 30 and 31, what his purpose is in writing. Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written, why? Why write this stuff for us? For what purpose? These are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That is what God wants for us through this book. And whether we're long-term Christians or brand new and looking in, he wants us to see and see who Jesus is.

He wants you to be convinced for the first time, or more and more and more deeply. He wants you to be absolutely convinced that Jesus is the Messiah.

He's God's Son. He's been sent by the Father into the world to be our Saviour and the Lord. But not just that. He wants us to believe.

[ 2 : 46 ] That is, don't just be interested in Jesus. Don't just appreciate God's Son. Don't have Jesus and church as a part-time activity on the edge of your life.

No, no, believe. Accept Jesus. Believe in him. Take him as your Saviour and your Lord. And as you do that, you will receive the greatest gift of all.

Eternal life. You will have eternal life. Our passage this morning, bang in the middle of this Gospel with this as the aim, comes at the end of chapters 5 to 10.

It's a section of John's Gospel all about who Jesus is. And it's this issue of who Jesus is that drives this conversation that we've read of and this conflict.

Look at it with me. At the top, verse 22, Then came the festival of dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's colonnade.

[ 3 : 46 ] The Jews who were gathered around him saying, How long will you keep us in the suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. Are you? Are you the Messiah?

In verse 33, Jesus having answered them, they've picked up stones to stone him. We are not stoning you for any good work, they replied, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.

The question is, almost the simplest question to be asked in a Christian church, how do you respond to the claims of Jesus Christ? Whether you've called yourself a Christian believer for 40 years or 50 years, or whether you're just investigating the Christian faith for the first time with us at St. John's, the question is, what will you do now?

And today, this week, this month, not in the past, what will you do now with this man who claims to be the God who demands your worship?

Three things to say this morning. From this passage, to move us to respond to Jesus rightly, whatever our Christian faith and experience. Here's the first. Notice that those gathered around Jesus are faced with plain evidence.

[ 5 : 07 ] In verse 24, the Jews say to Jesus, look at this with me, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.

As though Jesus has been vague or hidden, come on, Jesus, show yourself to us plainly. And Jesus answered, verse 25, I did tell you.

And of course he has. He's told them and us. His words, the claims he makes, are so very clear and plain.

And through chapters 5 to 10, we've been reading since January. The Father sent me. The scriptures testify about me.

Moses wrote about me. I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. If God were your father, you would love me. For I have come here from God.

[ 6 : 08 ] Before Abraham was born, I am. I am the good shepherd, says Jesus Christ. We say to our kids, to Emily and Sophie, I think they've got the point now.

It is not polite to talk about yourself all the time. As though you're the centre of the world. But Jesus Christ does talk about himself all the time.

Because he is at the centre of the world. And in his kindness, he wants the whole of humanity to hear so very clearly who he is.

A few verses down in verse 30, he will say, I and the Father are one. And so they will pick up stones to stone him to death. Why? Verse 33, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.

And forgive me if you've heard this before. There is a sort of way of thinking going round that says, maybe Jesus was just a regular guy who unexpectedly got swept up into something.

[ 7 : 11 ] And to his surprise, people started following him and projecting their desires onto him. You know, his words, his claims, so plain.

But not just that, think also of his works. And talk by itself is cheap. It proves nothing. Anybody can claim divinity, claim to be the son of God.

Jesus backs up his words with his works. The miracles and the signs he performs. If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly, they say. Verse 25, Jesus answered, I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me. What works? In John 5, Jesus meets a man who's been almost 40 years with paralysed or deformed legs.

Jesus speaks a word. Get up, pick up your mat and walk. And at once the man was cured. Just as God the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so God the Son, he just speaks a life-giving, dead-raising word.

[ 8 : 25 ] The man is healed. In John 6, Jesus feeds 15 to 20,000 with five loaves and two fish and then walks on water publicly in front of thousands, bending creation to his wishes.

In John 9, Jesus does the works of God, opening the eyes of a blind man. What are you meant to conclude from that? If you remember this, listen to what the now-seeing man said himself in chapter 9, verse 32.

Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. It is exactly right. It's exactly what you're meant to conclude.

Not just Jesus' words, but the works he does in his Father's name testify about him. He is from God, the long-promised Messiah.

He is God the Son. The evidence is undeniable and clear and plain. Jesus and the Father are one. God the Father working through and in his Son, Jesus Christ, God made flesh.

[ 9 : 46 ] See, through this recent record, you and I are faced with plain evidence. It is so important, this, for the Christian faith.

We live in a world that, in some sense, likes to say that religious belief is all in the mind, really. Life is tough, and we want to find meaning and comfort.

And so many of us, we wish for. We have a psychological need for something to hang on to. And so people say, these imaginary stories can help us, we who are too weak to cope with life by ourselves.

Believe what you want, if it helps you feel better. But the Christian faith is not like that. Do you see that?

There's nothing imaginary or fairy story-ish here. Here for us is solid evidence.

[10:53] Historical truth laid out for us, written for us. The public words and works of Jesus that demonstrate beyond doubt who he is.

So I ask this morning, what do you think about that? As you read John's Gospel with us, maybe for the first time or for the hundredth time, are you moved ever more towards being convinced about him?

You can be. You should be. Because God has, on purpose, given us enough here. He's given us enough for you and me to see and know that God the Son has stepped into our world and come to us.

You should be convinced. And yet, many people aren't.

Is that true? I mean, many people aren't convinced about Jesus. Neither today, in the circles and families and friends we move in, but also back then as well.

[12:10] Because faced with plain evidence, would you notice secondly here in these verses, a response of stubborn unbelief? I think this is pretty unnerving.

To see what happens in these verses, the Jews gathered around Jesus and say, How long will you keep us in suspense if you are the Messiah? Tell us plainly. Jesus answered, verse 25, I did tell you, but you did not believe.

The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe. You see, faced with plain evidence and face to face with God the Son as he speaks and teaches and works miracles, they do not believe and will not accept Jesus for who he is.

In John chapters 5 to 10 and here, we discover something actually quite dark about human nature in relation to God, Jesus Christ.

Back in chapter 5, he was speaking to some Jewish leaders. Jesus says, The scriptures testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

[13:34] Faced with evidence, you refuse to come to me. You don't want to. I mean, chapter 6, do you remember?

Jesus feeds the 15,000. When I go into schools, here or elsewhere, to talk a little bit about Jesus and Christianity, amongst the things the young people say, children often say, show me evidence. If only God would show up now and do something miraculous, then I would see and believe in him. But in John chapter 6, Jesus feeds the crowd miraculously, and then a bit later, they say, What sign will you give us so that we might see and believe?

It's like they're somehow blind to what Jesus does. They won't. They can't believe. And Jesus, almost from one angle, is exasperated.

John 6, verse 36, As I told you, you have seen me, and still you do not believe. You see, the reason why people don't believe in Jesus is not because there is too little evidence.

[14:50] That's worth hanging on to. I think that is how the story gets spun. Clever people, thinking people, who say we believe in evidence and hard facts and scientific reality, and Christianity doesn't have much of that, and that's why we don't believe.

If only there were more evidence, we would. Which is actually deceptive. Do you see how Jesus puts it in our passage in verse 25 on?

I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because, because you are not my sheep.

You see, coming face to face with the light, and faced with the plain evidence for Jesus, his words and his works, many refuse to believe.

Because you are not my sheep, Jesus says. My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me. Yet these people gathered around Jesus, they have no room for his word.

[16:02] They see, yet don't believe. They're not his sheep, but stand apart from him, kind of thumbs in ears and hands over eyes, neither willing nor able to see and come.

This is how it was then, in the first century. And this is how it is today. In our families and workplaces, amongst my Facebook friends.

Despite the plain evidence, deliberate and stubborn unbelief. It's actually very human, this. It's very darkly human for clever thinking creatures who don't want to be shown up by God.

Who don't want to change. Who don't want to surrender themselves to God the Son, you are my Lord. So very darkly human to stubbornly close your ears, shut your eyes and not believe.

[ 17 : 14 ] And then seek to get rid of Jesus. Which is exactly what happens here. In verse 30, Jesus declares, I and the Father are one.

That's not over the top. It's true. He is God the Son, doing God the Father's will. How do people respond? Again, his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him.

It's not kids in the playground with a little pebble. This means stone him to death. They're going to throw hand-sized rocks at him till he falls over.

Then they're going to smash his head till he dies from blunt trauma. That's what they want to do to him. Which is not something that people can do now. Because Jesus isn't standing in front of us today.

And so instead, just on purpose, get rid of him. From your thoughts, your conversation, your education, your public life. In verse 34 on Jesus, he stalls their stoning with some clever words about calling people gods.

[ 18 : 26 ] Jesus says to them, is it not written in your law, I've said you are gods? That was how Israel's judges were once addressed in Psalm 82.

If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, Scripture can't be set aside. What about the one whom the Father set apart at his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy?

Because I said I am God's Son. I think he's stalling them, shocking them, holding them. But then notice how in his love he continues to appeal to them.

Even as they aim to kill him. Do not believe in me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you don't believe in me, believe the works.

That you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I in the Father. But they won't consider Jesus' works. Their eyes, their ears are shut. Their minds are made up. And so again they tried to seize him.

[ 19 : 26 ] But he escaped their grasp. This is the end of John 10. Beautiful chapter about Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Bang in the middle of John's Gospel. What are we meant to do? You and me as we read. Have you tracked along so far?

Faced with plain evidence. Because the words and works of Jesus are here to demonstrate to us that he is the Christ, the Son of God. Faced with evidence.

Faced with stubborn belief. Yet also with stubborn belief all around us. Amongst the elite, the powerful, the thought leaders, the social media influences.

Amongst even those close to us whom we love and respect. What are you meant to do? As you come face to face with Jesus. Faced with plain evidence and stubborn belief.

[ 20 : 27 ] Lastly this morning. Lastly this morning.

That's stuck. You are meant to believe in Jesus. And enjoy secure life forever. Believe in Jesus.

And enjoy secure life forever. Just look at me with me at this ending. Verses 40 to 42. Then Jesus went back across the Jordan.

To the place where John had been baptising in the early days. There he stayed. And many people came to him. They said though John never performed a sign.

All that John said about this man was true. And in that place many believed in Jesus. This is John's gospel. These things are written so that you may believe.

[ 21 : 31 ] Seeing who Jesus is. The Messiah. God's Son. Sent by the Father into the world. To live and die and rise as our Saviour and Lord. Don't be swayed by unbelief all around you.

Believe in him. You say what does that look like? What would I be getting myself into? Well just look finally with me and very briefly.

At verses 27 to 29. Because nestled within Jesus' answer to those gathered around him. Is a just beautiful description. Of belief in Jesus.

And the life that flows from it. Look at this verse 27. My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.

Through John's gospel you are hearing the voice of your shepherd. The risen reigning Lord Jesus Christ. He knows you. He's calling you personally. And you're listening and you'll trust him.

[ 22 : 36 ] You'll follow him as your Lord and your God today. In living relationship with him. You believe in him. See next what flows from belief in Jesus.

Verse 28. I give them eternal life. And they shall never perish. Do you know this? As you believe in Jesus. Put your faith in him.

The Lord Jesus just gives this to you. Eternal life. Beyond death you will rise from the dead. You will enjoy everlasting life. In the presence of your God and Father for all eternity.

And you will never ever find yourself ruined or destroyed under the judgment of God. Lastly, thirdly in these verses.

This life that you enjoy with Jesus Christ. You will never ever lose it. Because once you have believed in him. And come to him. And put your hand in his.

[ 23 : 34 ] If you like. He will never let you go. I give them eternal life. And they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

My Father who has given them to me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one. These are such precious words.

For those who believe in Jesus Christ. If you are one of Jesus' sheep. given to Jesus by the Father. Then Jesus Christ, your shepherd.

Who knows you and loves you. He will hold you. In his iron grip. And come what may in your life. No one and nothing will be able to snatch you out of the hand of your saviour.

He has got you. He will hold on to you. He will keep you as a Christian believer safe. And secure. And because your life now is in the hands of God the Son.

[ 24 : 33 ] You are also held in the Father's hand. And there is no hand bigger and greater than his. For he is greater than all. And so you can know absolutely.

That no one and nothing can snatch you out of the hand of God the Father. Ever. You are loved. You are saved and secure for all eternity and for good.

This is John's Gospel. This is John 10. Faced with plain evidence. Faced with stubborn unbelief. Believe in Jesus today. And ongoingly in your life. And enjoy secure life forever. From this God of mercy and grace. Let me lead us in a prayer.

Let's pray together. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.

[ 25 : 45 ] No one will snatch them out of my hand. Our Father in a world of uncertainty. And insecurity.

And unbelief. Thank you. For your unchanging character. Your definite goodness. And the security that can be ours in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you that he has made himself plain. In his words and works. Thank you for his offer. Of eternal secure life.

Father make us those who come what may. Listen to his voice. And follow him. And grant us please. An ever deeper confidence and security through our lives.

As we stick with our good shepherd. And as he holds us unshakably. We ask. In Jesus name.

[ 26 : 48 ] Amen.